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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [EAID](#) [NU](#) [VE](#) [CU](#)  
SUBJECT: FSLN USING FOREIGN ASSISTANCE TO SPREAD  
IDEOLOGICAL MESSAGE IN LIBERAL STRONGHOLDS

REF: A. MANAGUA 0324

[1](#)B. 06 MANAGUA 1556

Classified By: Ambassador Paul Trivelli for reasons 1.4 (b and d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Liberal mayor Bronley Alvarez reports that the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) is using assistance programs sponsored by Venezuela and Cuba to spread the message that the USG "does nothing" in Nicaragua and only the FSLN and its allies can alleviate poverty. Alvarez fears that this strategy has won the FSLN many new friends in traditionally Liberal bastions such as Ciudad Dario, his municipality. He agrees that the best way to check Sandinista advances is through unity of the Liberal opposition and has organized a meeting for 26 mayors with the Nicaraguan Liberal Alliance (ALN) and dissident legislators of the Liberal Constitutional Party (PLC). End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) Poloff met with Ciudad Dario (Matagalpa Department) mayor Bronley Alvarez on February 26 to discuss the political activities of the FSLN in outlying departments. Alvarez commented that the FSLN is using a Cuba-sponsored literacy campaign and a Venezuela-sponsored lightbulb exchange program to spread a message in "Liberal territory" that the U.S. has abandoned Nicaragua and that the rural population can only count on the FSLN and their allies for help alleviating hunger and poverty. Now that all of the official government municipal assistance programs are in the hands of the Sandinistas, the Liberal mayors "have their backs against the wall," he said. (Note: Alvarez was a leader of the PLC mayoral revolt against Arnoldo Aleman prior to the November elections -- see ref B. The lightbulb exchange program was "borrowed" from the ALN's election campaign. End Note.)

[1](#)3. (C) Alvarez added that U.S. assistance is often "invisible" because the NGO partners take all the credit. He only learned about considerable U.S. aid to the northern departments of Matagalpa and Jinotega after attending a USAID-organized presentation with the Ambassador in Santo Tomas last year. Alvarez urged the U.S. to better publicize its programs and activities in the region.

[1](#)4. (C) Alvarez agreed that the only way to block the FSLN political juggernaut is to achieve Liberal unity. To this end, he organized a meeting of 26 mayors opposed to the leadership of corrupt PLC caudillo Arnoldo Aleman with ALN leader Eduardo Montealegre and PLC "dissident" National Assembly deputies (he only identified Enrique Quinonez) to take place on February 28. Alvarez commented that the PLC

rank and file feel "cheated" by Aleman and the Liberals in general following the electoral defeat by the FSLN. He said that the internal PLC elections called by Aleman are a "farce" used to legitimate his continued domination of the party.

¶5. (C) Alvarez noted that Aleman has summoned the PLC mayors to a meeting at El Chile (his hacienda) on March 1 to "bring them in line." He commented that Aleman's modus operandi is to threaten dissidents with persecution through the judges he controls, but that Liberals' fear of Ortega's totalitarianism is beginning to outweigh their fear of Aleman. Alvarez concurred, however, that a significant number of mayors and deputies will never break ranks with the caudillo because "they owe their power to Aleman."

¶6. (C) Comment: We will continue to work with courageous leaders such as Alvarez to encourage Liberal unification through a transparent, consultative process free of Aleman's influence. The ALN and PLC dissidents must capitalize on the Liberals' disenchantment with the caudillo before Ortega allows him to consolidate his power (by altering his "medical parole" status to allow him to travel throughout the country, for example). Ambassador has made numerous trips throughout Nicaragua to highlight USG assistance and the benefits of a friendly relationship; however, we will identify new opportunities for public outreach.

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